



# *The Virginia Saltwater Review*

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by

**Department of Plans and Statistics, Fisheries Management Division**

## **OVERVIEW**



Images from Captain Bob's

As summer continues, we are seeing most of our usual summertime friends, including speckled trout, spot, sea mullet, and croaker. Offshore catches include more tuna, numerous white marlin, and dolphin. Croaker have finally begun to make a showing in some areas including Oyster, Chincoteague, and the local bridges and tunnels. Spot are running at the local piers and throughout the region where anglers are loading up with bloodworms to catch them.

Flounder season has officially re-opened, and there are reports from several areas that flounder fishing has picked up significantly this week. In the lower bay, anglers have scored with red drum release citations, and a few large black drum are around as well. Next week looks to be another scorcher with a little bit of stormy weather thrown in. Good luck with the summertime fishing!



Images from Captain Bob's

## **THE FISHING REPORT**

### **Chincoteague**

According to Donna at Captain Bob's, large croaker are being caught everywhere. The areas off of Inlet View all the way to the Chincoteague Channel (as far as the carnival grounds) have produced fish in the 14- to 15-inch range. Kingfish and spot are biting in the inlet and just outside of the inlet between Markers 8 and 6. Grey trout up to 14 inches were caught in the same area. Flounder fishing seems to be on the upswing. Bluefish are available, and dogfish (up to 35 pounds) were caught at Cockles Creek. Offshore, tuna, along with large dolphin, were caught at the Lumpy Bottom with a few catches at the Parking Lot. King mackerel

were also hooked at the Lumpy Bottom, and gaffer bluefish were found at the Parking Lot. The wrecks produced 27- to 28-inch catch-and-release flounder at Blackfish Banks this week. Triggerfish were also found at the wrecks, and there are still reports that spadefish are being very selective (probably due to the numerous jellyfish). Any flavor of Fishbites synthetic bait strips is producing fish, and the shrimp flavor is actually out-fishing the bloodworm flavor.

### **Wachapreague**

At Captain Zed's, a marlin tournament was held last weekend, and the weather was fantastic. As of Saturday, approximately 21 marlin had been caught, and they were a mix of white and blue averaging 50 pounds. Most of the marlin were caught at the Norfolk Canyon. Other offshore action included bluefin tuna at the Lumpy Bottom with a slow showing of yellowfin tuna; dolphin were mixed in as well. Inshore, flounder fishing was closed, but croaker moved in. Anglers also caught kingfish, grey trout, and spot.

### **Onancock**

Captain Wil reports that fishing has picked up this week in Onancock. Anglers have hooked a few more flounder recently, and nice-sized croaker can be had if you know where to look. He reports that most of the larger ones were found in the bay, just south of Onancock. Other catches include sea mullet and spot. The spot can be caught on either squid or bloodworms, but bloodworms are obviously their favorite.

### **Cape Charles**

At Chris' Bait and Tackle, a 9-pound, 2-ounce speckled trout was brought in from the Cape Charles area. Other citations include a black tip shark release at 74 inches caught near Oyster and a 62-inch tarpon release from the same area. Croaker are biting in Oyster, Cape Charles, Kiptopeke, and Morley's Wharf.

Ernie at Cherrystone Bait and Tackle reports similar fishing to last week. An 8-pound, 2-ounce citation grey trout came in this week. Croaker fishing is very good around the bay, and the cobia action is improving with a 64-pounder arriving at the shop this week.

### **Lower Bay/Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel**

At Cobb's Marina, two red drum citations were weighed in (48 and 51 inches). Both came from the area near Cape Henry. Other catches included Spanish mackerel and flounder this week. Most anglers have had success with these fish trolling the jetties to the ODU reef.

Catches of small croaker were reported from Sunset Boating Center. Most of these fish can be found around the Monitor Merrimac and Chesapeake Bay Bridge tunnels.

According to staff at Salt Pond's Marina, offshore action is hot at the Norfolk Canyon where a 16-pound, 4-ounce blueline tilefish was hooked. Inshore action includes multiple red drum release citations hooked near Fisherman's Island.

At the York River Fishing Center, there are reports of decent spade fishing around Wolftrap Light. Cobia

were found around the York Spit with rumors of larger ones prowling. Earlier this week, a 63-pound black drum came in as well. The Gloucester Point Pier continues to produce plenty of fish for anglers.

Ken Neill, reporting secretary for the Peninsula Anglers Club, contributed the following:

The Virginia Beach Invitational Marlin Tournament concluded on July 27. First place went to SEA WOLF and Capt. Carl Beale with 6 white marlin releases. Billfish action is very, very good in our offshore waters. A lot of white marlin are being caught, and there are a good number of blue marlin out there as well. The sailfish action is the best I have heard of off of Virginia. Meat fish action consists of a very good dolphin bite, and some nice wahoo are being caught. Yellowfin tuna are still a rare catch, and the bluefin bite on the Fingers has pretty much stopped. Bluefin tuna continue to be caught at the Lumpy Bottom. Grouper, tilefish, and black sea bass are available to offshore bottom fishermen. Closer to shore, amberjack fishing is still very good at the South Tower and they also can be encountered at the Chesapeake Light Tower and on the wrecks in that region. Crevalle jack have shown at the Chesapeake Light Tower. King mackerel are being caught along the Virginia Beach oceanfront. They also can be found around the Chesapeake Light Tower area, the 4A Dry Dock, and out at the Fish Hook. A few tarpon have been encountered by anglers fishing for king mackerel in the Sandbridge area. Cobia and red drum have been caught by the same anglers. There is a lot of life along the oceanfront right now. Some tarpon are being caught in the seaside inlets of Virginia's Eastern Shore. The North Carolina sounds are rolling with tarpon. Spadefish are available over the coastal wrecks like the Tiger and Santore and at the structure of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. A few sheepshead were caught at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel but that bite is slow. Spanish mackerel are throughout the lower bay and along the oceanfront. Black sea bass and triggerfish are being caught by anglers working the coastal wrecks. The Triangle Wrecks, Tower Reef, and 4A Dry Dock are good locations for these fish. Big red drum can be caught on the Inner Middle Grounds while bait fishing, while others are being caught by sight casting to schools encountered around the lower bay and along the oceanfront. Schools of black drum are still popping up around the islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. Cobia have been slow for most. Capt. Jorj Head caught 9 fish up to 54 pounds this past week while chumming, and others have had good luck sight casting to fish along the buoy lines in the bay on out to the ocean. The flounder season has reopened as of July 31, and the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, Cape Henry Wreck, Back River Reef, and the Cell/buoy 42 area are all doormat hot spots. There are a number of flounder tournaments over the next several weeks.

Dr. Julie Ball, IGFA International Representative for Virginia Beach, contributed the following:

With a good weather forecast on the horizon for this week, there should be no problem finding a species to target. Both inshore and offshore varieties are providing good action. Flounder are back on the menu this week, with restless anglers already dropping live bait and jigs on lower bay structures in search of big doormats. Keeper flatties are also available on coastal wrecks and reefs.

The king mackerel rage is on. Although the action is not great this week, it is still good compared to recent years. Some folks have scored with scattered catches using various king fishing techniques along the ocean front. The best location is from Sandbridge down to False Cape in 20 to 60 feet of water. The larger kings are still coming from pier anglers, where a few smokers over 40 pounds were landed this week off the Little Island Fishing Pier. Spanish mackerel action is more hit and miss lately, with the bite moving further south towards Sandbridge. Boats are finding schools of

Spanish busting the surface, making a fun catch for sight casters. Taylor bluefish are also mixed in with the Spanish.

The folks at Chris' Bait and Tackle report that the big tarpon excitement of last week is taking a more normal pace, with a few confirmed sightings, but no reported hook-ups this week.

Some decent spadefish are schooling around the span of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, the Cell, and Plantation Light. Big croaker are also lurking around Plantation Light, where hardheads up to 21 inches were caught on clam while targeting spades this week. Bigger croaker are also coming from Oyster, from between the "fish light buoy" and the "chimney" in about 30 feet of water. Plenty of medium-sized croaker and nice spot are also scattered around the lower bay. The lower bay inlets, the Concrete Ships, and the small boat channel south of the 1<sup>st</sup> island are providing good numbers right now.

Speckled trout are making a good showing in lower bay backwaters, with some big fish also coming from the seaside shallows of Fisherman's Island this week. Chris Beck of Cape Charles landed a nice 6-pound, 2-ounce speck while casting a Mirrorlure in this area.

Although sheepshead action is better lately, most anglers are still striking out. A few scattered fish to 14 pounds are taking fiddler crabs along the Bridge Tunnel complex, but the bite is not like years past. Triggerfish are everywhere tautog and sheepshead reside. They are on lower bay structures and wrecks, and easy to catch on most any bait. Be prepared for a cleaning chore though, they have super tough skin.

Cobia are still taking chunks of bunker for chummers on the seaside of Fisherman's Island, while casters are also having good luck throwing bait to free-swimming schools and clusters of fish circling buoys at the mouth of the bay and along coastal waters. The biggest cobia are coming from the shoreline, where king anglers are catching them as a by-catch. Red drum are schooling around the mouth of the bay, with reports of schools also venturing towards the Virginia Beach ocean front.

Amberjack are a no-brainer at the South Tower, where anglers are finding good numbers of big fish. A few big barracuda are also coming from the same area. Scott Lowery of Virginia Beach scored with a king-sized 53-inch jack on a recent trip to the South Tower.

The Virginia Beach Fishing Center reports that billfish are back on track this week, with multiple white marlin release citations coming from the fleet. The best marlin bite is raging around the 450-line lately. Bull dolphin are plentiful around the Canyon, while a few big wahoo are making things interesting. Rumors of yellowfin tuna are floating around. A few boats spotted several schools, while a few other boats landed multiple tuna.

### **Virginia Middle Bay**

Spanish mackerel continue to have a strong showing with just about everyone catching their limits. Taylor-sized bluefish are mixed in with the Spanish mackerel and can be caught when fishing for the spot and trout that are being caught in the mouths of the rivers. Large red drum were seen around the jetties as well small

flounder and striped bass. As usual in hot weather, the early mornings and late evenings produce the most active fishing.

Capt. Jim Thompson reports that the fishing is going well for big spot and trout in the rivers (both the Rappahannock and the Piankatank). The fishing grounds off Gwynn Island are producing, but some are much better than others, depending on the tides. In the Rappahannock, the spot and trout are fast and furious, but the masses of bluefish are attacking them before you can reel in the fish. The blues are now from Windmill Point all the way to Gwynn's Island. The Spanish mackerel are also now in full swing with most boats getting their limits. Numerous flounder were hooked in the rivers but had to be thrown back during the closure. Bloodworms are the best bait. Try other baits on the top hook but always use bloodworm on the bottom. Some croaker up to 1 ½ pounds are in the catches, but no big schools are in the area. Large croaker were rumored in the buoy 42 and the Cell area. The best fishing this week was at the Spike and Butlers Hole in the Rappahannock, Cherry Point in the Piankatank, and Gwynn's Island on the tide changes.

Jerry Thrash, of Queen's Creek Outfitters, contributed the following:

Spot are biting well, and the catch includes a few #1 sized fish. Fish are being caught at Cherry Point, off Gwynn's Island in 25 to 30 feet of water, at the Spike (#3 Rappahannock marker), and at Butlers Hole. Bluefish and Spanish mackerel are available near Buoy 41A, around the Cell, and along the drop off at Windmill Bar. The Spanish bite is best at 6-8 knots as shown on the GPS. Slower speeds produce bluefish. Flounder season reopens on Thursday. One speckled trout release citation was registered this week from Stingray Point. Red drum are available almost anywhere there is grass or shell bottom. Small fish are in the creeks, and larger fish to over 30" can be had along river shorelines. They are mixed in with croaker, spot, and small striped bass, and are hitting Gulp baits. There are still no reports of cobia in this area.

### **Virginia Beach**

Offshore action is still hot, according to staff at the Virginia Beach Fishing Center, with white marlin and dolphin catches. Reports of numerous yellowfin tuna hooked at the Norfolk Canyon came in this week. Inshore, many cobia in the 60- to 70-pound range for large and 30-40 pounds for small were brought into the fishing center. King mackerel are being hooked in the inlet and surrounding areas. Spanish mackerel and taylor bluefish are showing up as well. Shorefishing has produced numerous spot, a lot of catch and release flounder, and a few croaker. Headboats are doing very well with croaker catches.

At Fisherman's Wharf Marina, Spanish mackerel fishing is going strong along the ocean front. Offshore, Paula reports catches of dolphin and white marlin around the 450 line.

### **Virginia Piers**

At the Ocean View Pier, anglers caught numerous spot and a few croaker this week. The spot run was very productive, particularly at night.

A lot of spot, sea mullet, and some croaker were hooked at the Lynnhaven Pier. Anglers were also catching flounder and throwing them back until Thursday (when the season reopened). For bait, bloodworms and squid have produced the most fish for pier anglers.

At the Virginia Beach Pier, Spanish mackerel were hooked this week. Nice king mackerel were caught as well (4 have been caught so far this year). Spot are getting bigger and more numerous. Sea mullet and bluefish continue to show with regularity, and a few puffers have been hooked from the pier.

Over the past week at the Sandbridge Pier, anglers have caught spot, bluefish, Spanish mackerel, and king mackerel (a 62 pound king mackerel was caught this week). Cobia are also biting—a 65-pounder was weighed in this week.

### **Outer Banks, NC**

Offshore fishing out of Nags Head continued to be slow last week with only billfish holding up their part of the bargain. Only scattered dolphin, wahoo, and king mackerel could be found. Bottom fishermen working in the 8- to 10-mile range had luck with triggerfish, black sea bass, tilefish, and snappers. Trollers had better luck with king mackerel and striped bass in the same range offshore. Near shore, anglers found flounder, bluefish, and Spanish mackerel. Pier fishermen continue to catch the same species. Some cobia were spotted in the nighttime hours. In the sound, the flounder were biting in the shallows around the marsh islands, and speckled trout and weakfish were working around the Washington Baum Bridge.

South of Oregon Inlet, the surf fishing has been improving. Puppy drum (juvenile red drum) were scattered all along the coast and at the inlets. Large sea mullet were caught around Ramp 49, and bluefish were landed around Ramps 43 and 44. Spanish mackerel were giving anglers action around the Point. Black drum could be found around the jetties at Oregon Inlet.

Offshore fishing out of Cape Hatteras was slow, but did pick up late week with dolphin making a comeback along with a few wahoo. Inside Hatteras Inlet, red drum, cobia, and bluefish were the notables being caught.

If you have additional information or would like further details contact Joe Grist at (757) 247-2237.

Please credit the Virginia Marine Resources Commission's THE SALTWATER REVIEW as the source of the fishing information.

# Virginia's Artificial Reef Program

Virginia's Artificial Reef Program enhances recreational fishing opportunities through the construction of artificial fishing reefs. Twenty sites have been established; fifteen in Chesapeake Bay and five in the Atlantic. A variety of "materials of opportunity", such as steel vessel hulls and demolition concrete have been used as well as specifically designed habitat structures. Most of the sites are marked with yellow 'special purpose' buoys, established and maintained by the Artificial Reef Program.

## Reef Material

Artificial reefs have been created of almost every material imaginable. Over the years, much has been learned about the importance of material selection in constructing a successful reef. There are two general classes of materials that are used to develop artificial reefs: materials of opportunity and fabricated materials.

### Concrete Pipe



Materials of opportunity are materials that have outlived their original purpose, are environmentally safe, are of suitable size and shape for the target site, can be transported to a permitted site, and are both durable and stable. Materials of opportunity take many forms and should not lead to the misconception of reef programs as elaborate forms of ocean dumping.

"Reef Exercise" (REEFEX), a joint Department of Defense-civilian cooperative pilot program, provided obsolete main battle tanks, armored personnel carriers, Sheridan tanks, and other military battle hardware for ten state artificial reef programs from New York to Louisiana. Between 1994 and 2003, 8 Armored Personnel Carriers and 18 Sheridan tanks were stripped, cleaned and

deployed on some of Virginia's offshore reef sites.

### Reef Ball™



Concrete, either in fabricated units specifically designed for artificial reefs or imperfect concrete manufactured products, such as culvert or rubble from razed buildings, sidewalks, roadways and bridges, has a demonstrated high success rate as artificial reef material in both marine and estuarine environments. The obvious reason for this high rate of success is the strong compatibility of the material with the environment in which it is placed, and for the purpose for which it is placed. Concrete is generally very durable and stable in reef applications.

Over the last 30 years, various fabricated concrete structures, such as reef balls™, tetrahedrons, igloos, and Tires-in-Concrete(TICs) have been developed and deployed to suite the needs of the reef environment being created.



## The Virginia Artificial Reef guys...



For more information on Virginia's Artificial Reef Program, contact Mike Meier at (757) 247-2263 or by e-mail at [mike.meier@mrc.virginia.gov](mailto:mike.meier@mrc.virginia.gov)

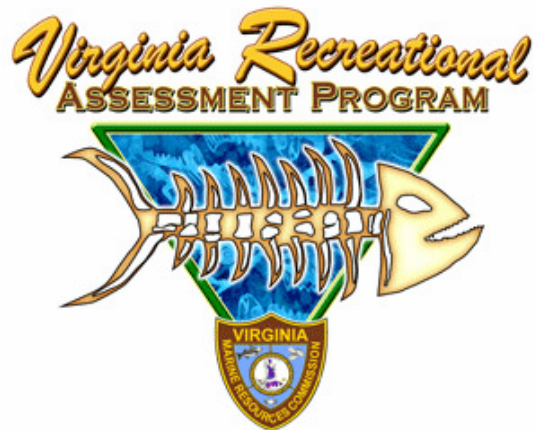


# Get Hooked!

## Report at

[www.vasaltwaterjournal.com](http://www.vasaltwaterjournal.com)

The Virginia Marine Resources Commission wants to know about the saltwater fish you caught and if you threw it back or took it home for dinner. How big was it? What species was it? Where did you catch it? This self-reported catch-and-release information will be posted on-line, giving the recreational angler a broader picture of what everyone else is catching -- and where.



The Fisherman's Journal is a tool intended to benefit the individual angler, the fishing community, and fishery managers. It allows individual anglers to keep an easy-to-retrieve record of their successful fishing experiences. It allows the fishing community to share and learn about other anglers' experiences. Finally, it benefits fishery managers by allowing them to assess fish populations by analyzing data provided by you, the recreational fisherman.

You will be able to report catch-and-release ranges, in addition to individual fish kept or released.

On those days that you catch-and-release 50 bluefish, you can just report the number caught and a range of lengths. Reporting individual measurements on more highly prized species -- such as Red Drum, Striped Bass and Flounder -- provides a greater benefit for everyone.

Anglers also may report their fishing trip information, including general location, time of day, weather and water conditions and type of gear and bait used. This information could be extremely valuable to other anglers to give them an idea of what is caught, where it is caught, and what bait is working on what species.

This self-reporting program will help anglers to become more successful and will provide fishery managers with important anecdotal information on recreational catches. The voluntary on-line reporting system is called the "Saltwater Fisherman's Journal," and is found at [www.vasaltwaterjournal.com](http://www.vasaltwaterjournal.com).

Virginia Marine Resources Commission  
Recreational Fishing Online Reporting



Recreational Saltwater Fishing

Welcome Jgrist,

Red Drum Reports are Needed!

We are collecting length data from red drum that anglers catch-and-release. In 2009, there will be a coastwide (Virginia to Florida) stock assessment of the red drum population, and information is lacking on the catch-and-release of red drum outside of the management slot limit (18 to 26 inches).

New 2008 Tautog Regs

Closed Season	May 1 through June 24
Minimum Size Limit	14 inches
Possession Limit	4 per person

June 16, 2008

Members: 1,457  
Trips: 295  
Catches: 3,941

Related Links














**THE VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION  
WANTS YOUR FISH....  
TO MEASURE AND AGE.**

*You catch it, you fillet it,*  
**but instead of throwing the remains in the trash,  
please donate them to science.**



The Marine Sportfish Collection Project will focus on species of fish that are difficult to collect through the agency's normal sampling program. Anglers are asked to donate their filleted carcasses (head and tail intact) of legal and fresh-caught:

<b>COBIA</b>		<b>RED DRUM</b>	
<b>SHEEPSHEAD</b>		<b>BLACK DRUM</b>	
<b>SPADEFISH</b>		<b>TAUTOG</b>	
<b>TILEFISH</b>		<b>GROUPER</b>	
<b>KING MACKEREL</b>		<b>SPANISH MACKEREL</b>	
<b>BLUEFISH (OVER 16 POUNDS OR 36 INCHES)</b>			

In return for participating in the project, the agency will provide a **ONE FREE PROJECT TEE SHIRT or HAT FOR EACH PARTICIPANT, PER MONTH.**

Please visit these bait and tackle merchants to participate:

**Bell Isle Marine (Hampton)**

**Chris' Bait and Tackle (Capeville)**

**Long Bay Pointe Marina (Virginia Beach)**

**Wachapreague Marina**

**Morningstar Marina – Gwynn's Island (formerly known as the Gwynn's Island Boatel)**

**Wallace's Bait and Tackle (Hampton)**

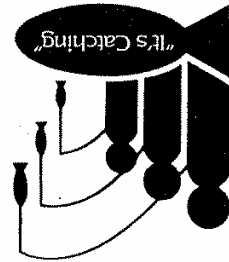
Website: [http://mrc.virginia.gov/rec\\_assessment/index.shtm](http://mrc.virginia.gov/rec_assessment/index.shtm)

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*Practice*

## CAREFUL CATCH

**REDUCE STRESS FACTORS THAT KILL FISH**

**Exhaustion \* Loss of Slime \* Wounds \* Time out of Water**